

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /066 W
-----071459 281915Z /66

P R 281636Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3876
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMEMBASSY BONN
DIA
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
SHAPEUSNR
USCINCEUR, VAIHINGEN GERMANY
USDOCOSOUTH
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 12007

USDOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

SHAPEUSNR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: CURTAIN RAISER ON THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

REF: ROME 11340

SUMMARY: LESS THAN A DAY BEFORE BALLOTING BEGINS ON
JUNE 29, THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SEEMS TO BE WIDE OPEN.
NO CONSENSUS HAS YET DEVELOPED ON A CANDIDATE WHO CAN
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RECEIVE THE SUPPORT OF THE THREE MAJOR POLITICAL GROUPINGS--
THE DC, PCI AND LAY PARTIES. ANYTHING LESS (A DC-PCI
OR PCI-PSI VOTING ALLIANCE NOT SUPPORTED BY THE THIRD
ELEMENT) WOULD UPSET THE POLITICAL BALANCE REPRESENTED BY
THE PRESENT ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT. THE PARTIES ARE EXPECTED
TO VOTE FOR FAVORITE SONS OR "CANDIDATES OF HONOR"
ON THE FIRST BALLOTS. THEREAFTER, BARGAINING AND

COMPROMISE WILL BE NEEDED TO WORK OUT A WINNING POLITICAL COMBINATION. THE DC HOPES TO ELECT A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT-- BUT MAY PREFER A LAY PRESIDENT IF THE POLITICAL PRICE FOR A DC CANDIDATE IS TOO HIGH. THE PSI INSISTS FIRMLY ON ELECTING ONE OF ITS OWN; HOW SERIOUS IT IS REMAINS TO BE SEEN. THE COMMUNISTS ARE CAUTIOUS, BUT HAVE SAID THEY WILL SUPPORT A SOCIALIST WHO CAN RECEIVE BROAD POLITICAL SUPPORT (I.E. DC). THE OTHER LAY PARTIES SEEM READY TO SUPPORT A SOCIALIST OR OTHER LAY CANDIDATE AS A GUARANTEE AGAINST FEARED DC/PCI ACCOMMODATION. THE LACK OF AN INITIAL CONSENSUS SUGGESTS THAT THE BALLOTING PROCESS MAY BE LENGTHY. END SUMMARY.

1. BALLOTING WILL BEGIN ON THE AFTERNOON OF JUNE 29 FOR THE ELECTION OF A NEW ITALIAN PRESIDENT TO SUCCEED GIOVANNI LEONE. 630 DEPUTIES, 323 SENATORS AND 58 REGIONAL DELEGATES--A TOTAL OF 1011 ELECTORS--WILL BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VOTE. THUS, 674 VOTES WILL BE NEEDED TO SATISFY THE REQUIREMENT OF A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY TO ELECT A PRESIDENT ON THE FIRST THREE BALLOTS. THEREAFTER, A SIMPLE MAJORITY OF THE ELIGIBLE VOTERS--506--WILL BE NEEDED. CROWDING INTO THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES AND ADJOINING CORRRIORS, THE ELECTORS WILL FILE UP INDIVIDUALLY TO DEPOSIT THEIR SECRET BALLOTS IN A LARGE URN. UNTIL A PRESIDENT CONFIDENTIAL

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IS ELECTED, TWO VOTES A DAY (IN THE MORNING AND AFTER-NOON WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF ONLY VOTE ON SUNDAYS) WILL BE CONDUCTED UNDER THE GAZE OF TELEVISION CAMERAS. ALTHOUGH THE VOTING COULD BE BRIEF (THE FIRST ITALIAN PRESIDENT WAS ELECTED ON THE FIRST BALLOT IN 1947), THE LACK OF INITIAL CONSENSUS ON A CANDIDATE SUGGESTS A LENGTHY CONTEST (LEONE WAS ELECTED ON THE 23RD BALLOT ON CHRISTMAS EVE).

2. DURING THE LAST TEN DAYS, THE TWENTY ITALIAN REGIONS EACH "ELECTED" THREE DELEGATES (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF VAL D'AOSTA WHICH SELECTS ONE). THE "ELECTION" OF THE REGIONAL DELEGATES WAS WORKED OUT INFORMALLY BEFORE HAND BETWEEN THE PARTIES IN ROME IN ORDER TO ASSURE A "PROPORTIONATE" DISTRIBUTION OF THE REGIONAL DELEGATES BETWEEN THE PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES. THE PARTIES FOLLOWED THIS DUBIOUSLY DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURE BECAUSE THE CONSTITUTION REQUIRES THAT REGIONAL DELEGATES BE ELECTED IN A WAY THAT ASSURES REPRESENTATION OF THE MINORITY PARTIES, BUT DOES NOT INDICATE HOW THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED IF THE 20 REGIONS WERE TO VOTE IDEPENDENTLY AND WITHOUT REFERENCE TO

ONE ANOTHER.

3. FOLLOWING THE SELECTION OF THE 58 REGIONAL DELEGATES,
THE VOTER STRENGTH OF HE INDIVIDUAL PARTIES (FROM
RIGHT TO LEFT) BREAKS DOWN AS FOLLOWS:

PARTIES	DEPUTIES	SENATORS	REGIONS	TOTAL
MIXED GROUP	-	3	-	3
MSI	17	6	2	25
DN	17	9	1	27
PLI	5	2	2	9
UNION VALDOSTANE	-	1	1	2
SOUTH TIROL PEOPLES'	3	2	1	6

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DC	263	137	21	421
PRI	14	7	2	23
PSDI	15	8	3	26
PSI	57	31	7	95
PCI	220	99	17	336
LEFT INDEPENDENT		8	18	- 26
RADICAL	4	-	-	4
PDUP	6	-	1	7

4. ALTHOUGH POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN EX-
TENSIVE CONSULTATIONS, THEY HAVE BEEN CAREFUL NOT TO
REVEAL THEIR PREFERRED CANDIDATES FOR FEAR THAT PREMATURE
DISCLOSURE MIGHT ADVERSELY AFFECT THEIR CHANCES. THIS
HAS KEPT THEIR TALK CENTERED ON GENERAL POLITICAL CON-
SIDERATIONS INVOLVED IN THE ELECTION OF A NEW PRESIDENT.

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A COMMON THEME HAS BEEN THE NEED TO ACHIEVE A SUFFICIENTLY BROAD CONSENSUS ON THE PRESIDENCY SO AS NOT TO UPSET THE POLITICAL BALANCE REPRESENTED BY THE PRESENT ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT. THIS COULD HAPPEN IF A PRESIDENT WERE ELECTED WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF ANY ONE OF THE THREE MAIN POLITICAL GROUPINGS--THE DC, THE PCI, AND THE LAY PARTIES. THUS, THE DC AND PCI HAVE BY THEMSELVES SUFFICIENT VOTES TO ELECT A PRESIDENT (ZACCAGNINI?) BUT CONSIDER IT POLITICALLY UNTENABLE TO DO SO WITHOUT PSI
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AND PREFERABLY OTHER LAY PARTY SUPPORT. SIMILARLY, EVEN IF THE PCI AND PSI COULD MUSTER 75 ADDITIONAL VOTES TO ELECT A CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT, THEY WOULD CONSIDER ANY AGREEMENT THAT EXCLUDES THE DC AS EQUALLY UNVIALE IN THE PRESENT POLITICAL CONTEXT. THE POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT OR COMPROMISE THAT WILL BE NEEDED TO OBTAIN THE SUPPORT OF ALL THREE GROUPINGS ON A SINGLE CANDIDATE--LAY OR CATHOLIC--HAS YET TO BE WORKED OUT.

5. IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY PRE-ELECTION CONSENSUS, THE PARTIES ARE EXPECTED TO VOTE FOR FAVORITE SONS OR "CANDIDATES OF HONOR" ON THE FIRST FEW BALLOTS. THEN, IN THE MANNER OF A HIGH-JUMP CONTEST, INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES WILL SELECT THE MOMENT THEY JUDGE MOST APPROPRIATE OR PROMISING TO ENTER INTO THE FRAY, HOPING THEY HAVE THE WINNING POLITICAL COMBINATION TO OVERCOME THE HURDLE. AT THIS POINT, IT IS DIFFICULT

IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT THE CHOICES THE PARTIES WILL EVENTUALLY MAKE. AS BEST AS CAN BE DETERMINED, HERE ARE THEIR STARTING POSITIONS:

-- CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC): FORMALLY, THE DC HAS SAID IT CAN SUPPORT ANY QUALIFIED CANDIDATE. PRIVATELY, THE DC HOPES IT CAN SUCCEED IN GETTING A DC PRESIDENT ELECTED. MANY, HOWEVER, WOULD PREFER AN ACCEPTABLE LAY CANDIDATE OVER A KNOCK-DOWN BATTLE FOR A DC PRESIDENT, PARTICULARLY IF THE COST OF GETTING A DC CANDIDATE ELECTED WERE HIGH IN TERMS OF CONCESSIONS TO THE PCI OR TO THE PSI. THE DC IS EXPECTED TO NAME VETERAN PARTY LEADER GONELLA AS A FAVORITE SON. THEREAFTER, ZACCAGNINI LOOKS
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LIKE THE LEADING DC CANDIDATE (SUPPORTED EVEN BY SOME DETRACTORS WHO SEEK A CHANGE IN THE PARTY SECRETARIAT). EARLIER INDICATIONS OF PCI SUPPORT HAVE HURT ZACCAGNINI'S CHANCES, HOWEVER, SINCE THE PSI AND LAY PARTIES HAVE CONSEQUENTLY TAGGED HIM AS THE "CANDIDATE OF THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE." TO BE SUCCESSFUL, HE WILL HAVE TO OVERCOME THEIR OPPOSITION. ANDREOTTI AND FANFANI ARE WAITING IN THE WINGS, THE LATTER REPORTEDLY COUNTING ON POSSIBLE SOCIALIST SUPPORT.

-- THE SOCIALISTS: THE PSI SAYS IT WILL GO ALL OUT FOR A SOCIALIST CANDIDATE. THEY POINT TO THE FACT THAT THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A SOCIALIST PRESIDENT. THEY ALSO BELIEVE IT WOULD GREATLY BOOST THE PARTY'S ELECTORAL PROSPECTS. HOW SERIOUS THE PSI INTENTIONS ARE REMAINS TO BE SEEN. THE PSI WILL PROBABLY OFFER A LIST OF SOCIALIST CANDIDATES. THESE INCLUDE EC COMMISSIONER ANTONIO GIOLITTI, FORMER PSI SECRETARY DEMARTINO, INTELLECTUAL NORBERTO BOBBIO, 77-YEAR-OLD PARTY THEORIST RICCARDO LOMBARDI, AND 82-YEAR-OLD PARTY WARHORSE SANDRO PERTINI. ALL HAVE SERIOUS LIABILITIES OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER.

-- THE COMMUNISTS: GOADED BY THE PSI'S CALL FOR A PSI CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT, THE PCI HAS INDICATED READINESS TO SUPPORT A SOCIALIST PROVIDED HE WERE ALSO ACCEPTABLE TO THE OTHER PARTIES (READ DC). THE PCI STANCE HAS BEEN HIGHLY CAUTIOUS, HOWEVER. THEY STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF ENHANCING POLITICAL UNITY THROUGH THE PRESIDENTIAL CHOICE. THOUGH THEY RECOGNIZE A PCI CANDIDATE COULD NOT

BE ELECTED, GIOVANNI AMENDOLA WILL PROBABLY BE
A FAVORITE SON. ULTIMATELY, THE DC'S POSITION WILL
PROBABLY BE DECISIVE.
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-- THE OTHER LAY PARTIES: SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, LIBERALS
AND REPUBLICANS HAVE ALL INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO
SUPPORT AN "ACCEPTABLE" PSI CANDIDATE. THEREIN
LIES THE RUB. THE PLI, FOR EXAMPLE, SAY THEY
CAN ACCEPT GIOLITTI OR PERTINI BUT NOT DEMARTINO.
THE PSDI MAY VOTE INITIALLY FOR SARAGAT; GENERALLY,
HOWEVER, IT IS COORDINATING ITS POSITION CLOSELY
WITH CRAZI. THEY HAVE NOT COMMENTED ON THE
POSSIBILITY OF PAOLO ROSSI, FORMER PRESIDENT OF
THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT WHO HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED
WITH THE PSDI. REPUBLICANS MAY INITIALLY CAST
BLANK VOTES; THEY WILL PROBABLY SEEK THE RIGHT
MOMENT TO LAUNCH 75 YEAR-OLD PARTY LEADER
UGO LA MALFA.

-- THE RADICALS: READY TO SUPPORT A PSI
CANDIDATE.

-- PDUP: HAVE SAID THEY WILL VOTE FOR THE PSI
BUT ONLY AS A CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT; TO MAKE
THEIR POINT THEY WILL VOTE ALTERNATELY FOR THE
PSI AND PCI.

WITH LESS THAN A DAY TO GO, THE GAME SEEMS WIDE OPEN.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, ELECTION FORECASTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ROME12007
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780267-1067
Format: TEL
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780611/aaaaajpi.tel
Line Count: 313
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5abec97d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 ROME 11340
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2172328
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CURTAIN RAISER ON THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
TAGS: PINT, IT
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5abec97d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014